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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MONROVIA 000550

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W

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SUBJECT: ECOWAS COMMISSION PRESIDENT ON TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION REPORT AND GUINEA

REF: A) MONROVIA 487 B) MONROVIA 549

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission President Mohamed Ibn Chambas shared his concerns with Ambassador that if the GOL does not respond appropriately to the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) recommendations, the situation could degrade. The two met during a July 26 pull-aside at the Liberian Independence Day official reception (Ref B). Chambas suggested an outside mediator be brought in to move the process forward. Chambas also told the Ambassador that the Guinean junta's failure to act on a number of pre-election benchmarks was of serious concern to ECOWAS. A July 15 meeting of sub-ECOWAS members who comprise the Mano River Union (MRU) has already been delayed due to Guinean instability. END SUMMARY

CHAMBAS' VIEWS ON TRC REPORT'S RELEASE

¶2. (C) Chambas told the Ambassador that it was important for Liberia's international partners to continue backing its reconstruction by making positive public signals of support for President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's government, especially given the release of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) final report and its recommendation that Sirleaf be banned from government office for 30 years (Ref A). Chambas described the report's release as sudden and noted that many ECOWAS leaders had been blindsided by its contents.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador replied that the TRC was under a firm deadline for the report's release. While overall a good accounting, she continued, many of the report's recommendations have been sensationalized and the document has subsequently created more issues than it resolved. Chambas said that it was important for Liberia to tread carefully and with international support when following through on the report's recommendations. Any prosecutions, he said, should be "targeted" and not "blanket." Chambas suggested that a prominent statesman come to serve as a mediator for TRC issues. He offered the possibility of former Nigerian President General Abdulsalami Abubakar who mediated the Accra peace agreement or renewed involvement in the TRC process by the International Commission for Traditional Justice (ICTJ). (NOTE. The ICTJ was previously involved in the drafting of the TRC's final report. END NOTE.)

GUINEA AND MANO RIVER UNION SUMMIT

¶4. (C) Commenting on the political situation in Guinea, Chambas told Ambassador that ECOWAS had given Guinean junta

leader Captain Moussa Camara a list of benchmarks that Guinea's government needed to meet in the run-up to expected elections. Camara's lack of action on this benchmark list was causing concern among ECOWAS members.

¶5. (SBU) Meanwhile, President Sirleaf clarified in an interview published on July 28 that the summit of the Mano River Union (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire) scheduled for July 15 in Conakry was pushed back to August due to continued instability in Guinea. The summit date is dependent upon the availability of Ivoirian president Laurent Gbagbo, who is scheduled to assume the chairmanship of the MRU. Gbagbo was unwilling to travel to Conakry on July 15 for the summit due to news reports of local instability. The meeting is traditionally hosted by the outgoing MRU Chairman (currently President Sirleaf), but is taking place in Guinea to guarantee participation of Guinean leader Camara. He is unwilling to leave Guinea during its current period of instability, Sirleaf said.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: ECOWAS has been a key player in efforts to actively promote Liberian reconstruction and stability since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2003, and was active in International Contact group on Liberia efforts to promote the TRC. We should encourage the National Legislature to work with ECOWAS as it moves forward with its official response to the TRC report's recommendations. While the idea of bringing in an African with the proper moral authority is tempting, further international involvement in what should be a Liberian process of reconciliation should only be pushed if needed and accepted by all local players. Otherwise, the participation of former Nigerian president Abubakar or anyone

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else in the reconciliation process or renewed involvement by the ICTJ could be seen as an attempt by President Sirleaf to use international players to affect the legislative response to the TRC. We continue to believe that the next step is to have the Independent National Human Rights Commission (INHRC) named and begin its work. It would be then be appropriate to have the INHRC invite a prominent African to help in the way forward.

THOMAS-GREENFIELD